



Finnish Institute of  
Occupational Health

# WORK, PRIVATE LIFE, AND TIME MANAGEMENT

## Entrepreneurs' guide



Leverage from  
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## Background and purpose of this guidebook

This guidebook was written to help sole traders and other micro entrepreneurs with combining work and private life and with time management. The original guide was written in uncomplicated Finnish in order to make it easy to read, even if Finnish is not your first language.

There are many reasons that can make it challenging for entrepreneurs to combine work and private life. Entrepreneurs often work long hours. And often, it is not as easy to separate work and private life as it is for employed people. But it is possible for entrepreneurs to succeed in combining work and private life. The tips given in this guidebook will support you in doing that. We hope this guidebook will give you ideas for promoting and maintaining your well-being!

This guidebook was produced in the European Social Fund project Promoting the well-being of micro entrepreneurs through networking (2015–2017), a joint project of the Finnish Institute of Occupational Health, the Federation of Helsinki Parishes, and NewCo Helsinki. Our aim is to promote the networking and well-being of entrepreneurs. Other guidebooks produced as part of the project include *Networking - providing support for micro entrepreneurs*, and a guidebook on entrepreneurs' occupational health care and occupational safety.

We would like to thank all the entrepreneurs that we have had the pleasure to meet in our workshops and at other events during the project. We would also like to thank everyone that gave us ideas for writing this guidebook. We would like to extend special thanks to the co-owners of a business, Jenni Teimonen and Kaisa Seppä, and start-up entrepreneur Pierre Jallow! In this guidebook, they share their methods for time management and combining work with private life and the challenges they have faced.

Helsinki, 2 October 2017

Auli Airila and Barbara Bergbom

# Entrepreneur's work and private life

## **Do you have enough time and energy for work and family life, other social relationships, hobbies, and adequate sleep and rest?**

If you do, congratulations! You seem to have managed to successfully combine work with the rest of your life – at best, they make each other even better. It is important, in terms of your well-being and coping with work, that you find a balance between the needs of family and private life and the requirements of your work.

## **Or do you often feel that you don't have time and energy for life outside work?**

If you do, you are not alone. One in three entrepreneurs feels that difficulties in combining work and private life make it harder to cope. These problems are the most common causes of stress among sole traders and micro entrepreneurs. On average, entrepreneurs work longer hours and take less time off than others. That is why entrepreneurs often have less time and energy for recreational activities.

Sometimes you might find yourself in a conflict caused by work and other needs in life. Busy times at work may mean that you don't have time to take care of things in your private life. If these situations happen often, or if you often have difficulties in combining the various areas of your life, you may start to feel the strain. It is especially stressful if you constantly feel that you are not doing enough and feel guilty about not having enough time and energy. You should not feel guilty! This will only add to your stress. Rather than feeling guilty, you should try to find solutions.

It is possible to successfully combine entrepreneurship and life outside work. Successful entrepreneurs often talk about the importance of combining work and private life. Some people actually become entrepreneurs because they want to be able to better combine work with the rest of their life. Entrepreneurs can often decide their working hours. This can help in combining work and private life although being an entrepreneur can be restrictive.

## Work, family, and free time

Work, family, relatives, friends, hobbies, rest and sleep are the elements that make up life. In the best case, there is no competition between these elements. Many people also find faith and practising religion important.

Some entrepreneurs also think about work during their free time. This means that they are actually working all the time. It is clear, then, that they are unable to fully recuperate and feel refreshed even in their free time.

Success in combining work and private life varies at different stages of life. It is especially challenging when your children are young or when your elderly parents need a lot of help, for example. It is even harder if you find yourself in both of these stages of life at the same time. Additional challenges come from having some family members living far away, in another country perhaps. This may mean that your relatives are not able to help you as much with child-care and housework as they could if they lived close by. It may also be more difficult and require special arrangements to help your family members if they live far away.

**FOOD FOR THOUGHT:** *Which things matter the most in your life? If you were to prioritise everything, what would the list be like? If things at the top of your list are things that you would like to spend more time on, think about ways of doing so. Think about the practical changes this would require. Sometimes small changes are enough.*



## Ways of combining work and private life

Finding a balance between work and private life does not mean allocating the same time to both. But you should make sure that you do not neglect the most important areas of your life. You also need adequate rest and sleep in order to cope at work and in life.

Sometimes it may be difficult to find a balance. You may be able to carry on struggling between work and private life for a while. But in the long term, this will have a negative impact on your well-being. It is vital to try to find a balance where there is no competition between being an entrepreneur and having a life.

There is no single correct way of combining or separating work and the rest of your life. Some people prefer a clear separation, while others don't wish to separate work and free time. Some entrepreneurs feel that they are able to take care of business in their free time, and they find that this does not interfere with the rest of their life. Even if it doesn't bother the entrepreneur, their spouse or other family members may find it difficult if they are working during their free time. It is important to find a balance between work and private life that is satisfactory to you, your family, and friends.

Sometimes it is good to get away from work completely, so that you don't even think about work. This will help you recuperate and keep up your energy. This will also help you run your business. The best way to recuperate from work is to do something completely different.

Entrepreneurs that don't have a spouse or family demanding attention may find that work takes over larger portions of life. In those situations, it is also important to understand that just because you don't have a family doesn't mean that you don't have a life!

New entrepreneurs are often so excited about their business that they spend almost all of their time working. However, you should not neglect your private life even when starting your business. Otherwise, you might wake up one day and realise that you have no life outside your work. You should pay attention to all areas in your life even if you do find work exciting.





## Helpful tips for combining work and private life

### What to do when...

**...your private life requires time away from work?** Sole traders may find it difficult not to go to work or not do their work. But sometimes you need to be able to not go to work if you or someone close to you is ill, for example. In these situations, it may help to have a substitute. Some sole traders have made such arrangements with other entrepreneurs. Of course, it depends on the nature of your business whether someone else is able to stand in or not. You should think about these alternatives and solutions in advance.

**...there is a new baby on the way?** Entrepreneurs may find it difficult to take parental leave. When planning to have a baby or during pregnancy, many entrepreneurs have to think about income and how to arrange their business when they are away.

Entrepreneurs are entitled to maternity, paternity, and parent's allowance from Kela (the Social Insurance Institution of Finland). Entrepreneurs may also be eligible for special maternity allowance if they must take time off work before the start of the maternity allowance period. This may apply to you if you are exposed to certain chemicals or radiation at your work.

Applications for parent's allowance are made to Kela. You must apply for maternity allowance at the latest two months before the baby is due. The amounts of parental allowance and sickness allowance are determined according to payments made to the self-employed person's (YEL) or the farmer's (MYEL) pension insurance, rather than by actual income.

In addition to personal income, entrepreneurs have to think about how to continue the operation of their enterprise if they themselves are unable to be involved in the operations, at least not full-time. Whether an entrepreneur is able to work during maternity and parental leave depends on the nature of the business. Kela pays the minimum allowance for the days the entrepreneur works. Some entrepreneurs decide to close down their business or hire a substitute for the period of parental leave.

Enjoy the new addition to your family! Your family is a source of strength in your life.

Additional information: [www.kela.fi](http://www.kela.fi)

**...you don't have time or energy for housework?** It is possible to purchase many domestic services, such as cleaning. You can use the time you save on your business and your life outside work. It is also possible to outsource housework temporarily, when work demands more of your time. However, many entrepreneurs do not make enough money to be able to purchase services from outside. The tax administration provides some help with this by way of a tax credit for domestic expenses. This means that you can make a tax claim for some of the costs paid for domestic work and repair work in your home. You can also make a claim in your taxation for work you paid to be done in the home of your parents, such as repair work.

You should also talk with your spouse about how to share house work in your home. Would your spouse be able to take more responsibility for cleaning or shopping, for instance? This would mean more time for you as a couple and as a family.

You can also take a more relaxed attitude toward housework and accept that your home does not always have to look perfect. No-one is required to always have time and energy for everything!

**...you need help with childcare?** Many families receive help with childcare from their parents or other relatives. But not everyone has a social network of family. Fortunately, other help is available. Don't be shy, talk to your friends, neighbours, and the parents of your children's friends, and ask for help. Community exchange systems, or time banks, have also been set up where professionals can exchange their services. Mutual help can benefit all participants! You can also buy childcare services from operators such as the Mannerheim League for Child Welfare. Many young people and students like to earn extra money by babysitting or cleaning. You might find the right person on the notice board of your local shop, or you can always advertise there yourself.

### **It is important to nurture your relationship as a couple and with your friends**

Good relationships are a great source of energy and happiness; you should take good care of them. Talk with your spouse, and try to find solutions for combining work and the rest of your life. You will have no time for relationships if your work takes up all of your energy. Maybe you can't invest in relationships as much as you would like. In that case, it is important to focus on the relationships that you consider the most important.

### **What can you do when you have problems in your relationship?**

Sometimes it seems impossible to resolve issues in your family. You should not hesitate to try to find professional help in combining work and your private life. It is good to look for help before your problems escalate. This kind of help is available from Väestöliitto (the Family Federation of Finland), family counselling services of municipalities and the church, and private couples' therapists.



### **Do not compromise with rest and sleep!**

Most people need seven or eight hours of sleep at night. Many entrepreneurs sleep less in order to make more time for work and their private life. Research shows that this is a bad strategy; it may, in fact, harm your health. Your brains and your body need enough sleep in order to recuperate and run the processes that take place during sleep. When you are tired, your work is slower and the quality suffers.



## How to combine work and private life

*Jenni Teimonen and Kaisa Seppä run their business, Little Copenhagen Oy, together. They sell Scandinavian children's wear and second-hand children's clothes. Little Copenhagen is open six days a week, and they also have an online store. They started the company five years ago. We asked both entrepreneurs how they manage to combine work and their private lives.*

Jenni says that she normally manages fine, but a lot of coordination is required: "It helps that the shop opens later, at ten, and I live close by. Sometimes I also work from home, and I often do some of my work at home after the children have gone to bed. I make sure I am physically active. I don't have much me-time for anything else. During the week, I often don't sleep enough in order to get everything done. But I sleep more during the weekend".

Kaisa also manages to combine work and her private life most of the time. She finds time for rest and exercise, but other than that, Kaisa's free time revolves around her children's hobbies: "Combining work and the rest of your life is easier if you can also work from home. Because there are two of us, Jenni and I can make arrangements and be flexible in order to make our schedules easier. This would be much harder as a sole trader. For a couple of years now, we have also had hired staff, and we could not manage all the work without them".

Jenni has similar experiences: "When we started our business, we didn't hire any staff. Then we got involved in employment subsidy activities, and we now have two permanent members of staff. The first years were demanding. We only took a two- or sometimes three-week summer holiday. Today, we are both able to take four weeks".

### Challenges in combining work and private life

Although Kaisa and Jenni have managed to successfully combine work and their private lives, they still face challenges: "The hardest thing is finding time for childcare and running the business, and organising our schedules".

It was even more challenging when Jenni's children were younger: "Fortunately, my husband was able to participate in everyday life more at that time. Now he is often away on business trips and doesn't have that much time for everyday issues".

Kaisa brings up the difficulties of combining work and childcare when children get sick. She is normally able to work from home when that happens: "Grandparents are also able to help with childcare. We have also hired a nanny at times".



Jenni also has help from grandparents: "We are also lucky to have grandparents that are able to help with childcare. And our next door neighbour can also look after the children. And we use the services of a cleaner".

Kaisa also buys cleaning services, and she is quite happy with the situation: "Overall, I feel that combining work and the rest of my life is easier as an entrepreneur than it would be if I had a job somewhere. This way, I am able to do some of the work at home when it suits me. Of course, my support network of grandparents and the cleaning and childcare services plays a vital role".

### Advice for a new entrepreneur

**Kaisa:** "As an entrepreneur, you really need to think about, and be aware of, the commitment that is required. And you need to be able to ask for help. There's no point in doing everything yourself. It is better to concentrate on what you do best and what you enjoy. It is also good to make contingency plans for when something unexpected happens".

**Jenni:** "I find being an entrepreneur with someone else easier than doing it alone. It is also nice to have someone to share the joys and worries of entrepreneurship. I would recommend you think about finding a business partner. Entrepreneurs need to know how to plan, coordinate, and be systematic. If these are not your natural strengths, you can learn them through training".

# Time management at work

In line with current trends, many entrepreneurs also find that digital tools have meant that work has become more flexible in terms of time and place. Entrepreneurs' freedom, independence, and right to make decisions put entrepreneurs in a good position to manage their own use of time. Of course, the nature of the business has an impact on time management possibilities. For instance, a sole trader running a shop or a restaurant is normally restricted to certain times and a location.

Digital tools can make time management easier for entrepreneurs. Electronic client registers, websites, and online booking facilities and stores are examples of good tools for managing customer relationships. They can also be useful in business operations that are tied to a time and place, such as hairdressers.

More and more people are using digital tools for finding information and for interaction. Entrepreneurs should also develop digital services for their customers. They may prove useful in both business operations and time management. Then again, entrepreneurs may find the constant availability and contacts created by mobile technology a burden and a cause of time-management issues.



**FOOD FOR THOUGHT:** *Here are some easy ways to evaluate your time management: Do you plan your work and working days in advance? Do you prepare schedules for your work tasks in advance? Do you have time to carry out the tasks you had planned during your working day? Do you feel in control of your own use of time?*

If you normally have time to complete the tasks you had planned, and you are not working longer and longer hours, it would seem that you have good control over your work and time management. However, if you are constantly working long hours or not completing your tasks, you should look at what you are spending your time on. Are you prepared to change the way you work and your use of time in order to better support your well-being?





## Tips for time management at work

**Make long-term and goal-oriented plans for your work.** Determine the key dates in terms of your business. When will you complete tasks related to taxes, accounting, wages, and insurance? What kind of marketing campaigns will you run during the year? Will you participate in events or trade fairs? Have you made time for developing your business? When will you take a holiday? Write down in your annual calendar your key events and tasks, and the time it will take to prepare for them. Modify your plan as required throughout the year.

in your calendar and task list for unexpected tasks. Allow time for getting from one place to another.

**Prioritise!** Think about the key tasks in terms of your work and start with them. For example, you can prioritise according to customer needs, and the importance, urgency, or attractiveness of tasks. This way, less important tasks are postponed, and some tasks are left out altogether. Prioritising can also mean that you let go of some issues or tasks.

cannot be avoided. But try to give yourself room for concentration.

**Remember to plan for breaks during your working day.** Regular breaks for eating are important and keep you refreshed, as long as your meals are not too heavy. You should make time for recuperation breaks during the day. Short breaks for exercise, and physical activity during the working day will also support your health and well-being. Make use of quieter times and go to the gym, for example, if work permits.

**Make time for life outside work.** You should also make time for family, social gatherings, and hobbies. Write down your holiday in your calendar in advance, and keep to it.

**Learn to say no.** Think about the tasks, meetings, and events that are important or vital for your work. Could you miss or let go of some of them? For instance, could an electronic booking system or online store make your work easier and cut down telephone contacts?

**Evaluate your performance in time management regularly.** What did you do well? Did you achieve the goals you set for the working day or week? Did you stick to your schedule? Is there something you could do better tomorrow?



**Make a schedule for your work and appointments.** Make a list of tasks to be completed for each week and working day. It helps to keep your calendar updated. Remember to leave some space

**Do one thing at a time.** This will help you complete tasks faster. Concentration will also give your work a sense of control; interruptions and multitasking make work less efficient. Some interruptions

## You can improve your time management skills

Many factors impact entrepreneurs' use of time. Your work may be linked to a number of other operators, such as subcontractors, suppliers, partners, authorities, or customers. This means that you are not always in control of your use of time when other operators also have an impact. You may also face surprises. Sometimes you need to be flexible and respond quickly to a customer's requirements. This may mean longer hours and force you to compromise on free time and your hobbies. This makes the work of an entrepreneur unpredictable and very busy at times. During busy times, it is particularly important to stay on top of your time management.

## What can you do when you don't have time for everything?

**Outsource some tasks.** Are there tasks that you could pay someone else to do? If these are tasks outside your core skills, buying them from someone else will save you time and give you the energy to concentrate on your core skills. Many entrepreneurs outsource accounting, marketing, administration, or cleaning tasks. The expenses are tax-deductible.

**Hire staff.** Sole traders and micro entrepreneurs are often wary of hiring staff for financial reasons. If you have more work than you can handle, you should consider the cost of hiring one member of staff, even part-time, and whether you can afford it. People on work placement and summer workers might also be a solution – many municipalities have programmes in place for financial support for hiring staff. If you can't afford to hire staff, you should take on less work rather than risk your health and well-being. Contact the experts at your local ELY Centre or Enterprise Agency. They can help you assess and calculate whether you can hire staff or find other additional resources.

**Make use of your networks.** Sole traders may find it particularly difficult not to go to work or not do their work. Cooperation and mutual help among other entrepreneurs may be a solution. Networks can be helpful in many situations in ways that you could never anticipate! For more tips on networking, see our guidebook *Networks – Providing support for entrepreneurs*.

## Tools for time management

Electronic tools and software programmes designed for work and time management can help you focus on your core operations. There are also a number of tools designed for project management. All the tools listed here are free of charge.

### **Aikani application, [www.ekonomit.fi/aikani](http://www.ekonomit.fi/aikani) (in Finnish)**

With the Aikani application, you can divide your time into five categories: work, work for no money, free time, physical activity, and sleep. The application helps you prioritise your work as you can enter key words for the issues you wish to monitor. For example, key words allow you to monitor the time you use for emails, invoicing, or client meetings.

### **Fokuskello, [www.ttl.fi/ajanhallinta](http://www.ttl.fi/ajanhallinta) (in Finnish)**

Fokuskello helps you concentrate. It is particularly suitable for making specialists' work more efficient. Fokuskello is based on the Pomodoro technique, allowing you to work for 25 minutes, for example, before taking a short break. This makes it easier to tackle jobs and cuts down on disruptions to concentration.

### **Evernote, [www.evernote.com](http://www.evernote.com) (in English)**

Evernote is an electronic notebook. It is suitable for project management, for example. The application includes tools for ideas, time management and creating to-do lists, reminders, and notes. The basic version is free, and more facilities are available in the purchasable version.

### **Toodledo, [www.toodledo.com](http://www.toodledo.com) (in English)**

With the Toodledo application, you can create and share lists and memos, set goals for yourself and monitor them. The application also enables you to monitor projects, prepare and manage to-do lists, and monitor the use of time in projects. The application comes with reminder and calendar facilities. The application is free but requires you to create an account.

## Your networks support time management

Time management is demanding; you need to plan your use of time, implement your plans, and monitor your performance. All this requires self-management skills. As an entrepreneur, you should plan your time management in the long and short term – from planning your year to planning each week and day. Time management should also include the element of combining work with the rest of your life.

You should discuss the issue and methods of time management with other entrepreneurs, your staff, or your family and friends. What kinds of tips and support can your social network give you for time management? Outside help is also available for developing time management skills. For example, the Finnish Institute of Occupational Health offers time management training.





## How I manage my time

*Pierre Jallow is a start-up entrepreneur at WeBridge Oy. The business idea is to connect corporate clients with the most effective programs based on their wellbeing needs.*

Pierre says that he uses to-do lists all the time for project, time, and task management. He also carries a notebook for writing down the key tasks to be completed during each week: “I give myself smiley faces for work completed. If I complete around 90% of a task, I get a smiley face 😊. If I am around 80% successful, I give myself a straight face 😐. If my performance is below 70%, I give myself a sad face ☹️”, Pierre says, describing his technique. “The tasks that I do not manage to complete at least at the 90% level, become my priority for the following week (unless I have even more important tasks lined up), and I try to turn them into a happy face. I find this method extremely useful, as it helps me prioritise my tasks. Of course I also use an electronic calendar for scheduling my work and free time”.

### On time management techniques

“For me, the best time management techniques are prioritisation, scheduling, and planning. My biggest challenge is saying no and multitasking, i.e. doing many tasks at the same time. I try to avoid it by concentrating on the task at hand and leaving other things to the side. If I think of something else, I write it down, but I carry on with the task I have started. Of course, this is often easier said than done! At times, I also find it useful to remove distractions; I switch off my phone or close unnecessary windows and alarms on my computer”.

### Time management is vital

“For entrepreneurs, time management is vital. If you are a sole trader or you only have a few members of staff, there is often so much to do that it is necessary to carefully plan your use of time.

Being an entrepreneur is challenging. New entrepreneurs, in particular, may find time management difficult. New entrepreneurs may use their time on tasks that are not very important, without even noticing it. That is why it is important to prioritise. It is not always easy, but as you gain more experience, you will also improve your time management skills!”

## Time management challenges

“For me, prioritising is the most difficult part of time management. How will I know which tasks are the most important ones for my business, and which tasks will take me closer to the targets I have set?

Even if I have a good plan, I sometimes forget to follow it, or sometimes, in the middle of everything, I'll come up with a new idea that seems really important although it ends up being quite irrelevant. Sometimes my calendar is too full. That might mean that it will take me weeks to complete all the tasks that I had planned to complete a lot faster.



” *Prioritise. Leave less important things to the side.*

I think it is also important to make time for recreational activities, but I sometimes find it very difficult. I constantly practise finding balance!”

## Time management tools

“I use the Todolist application for time management. I also have an electronic calendar and a notebook for writing down ideas and schedules. With my business partners, I use the Slack application for discussions and archiving, and Google Drive for sharing documents. Shared electronic work space is a great help in time management. In addition, I think it is important to plan your life as well as your business operations. It helps you prioritise things”.

## Time-management advice for a new entrepreneur

”Keep your objective(s) clear in your mind, write down the key results you expect to have and then identify and focus on those tasks in your business operations. Never loose site of your mission and have a thirst for learning that supports your business.

Prioritise. Leave less important things to the side, or leave them out altogether. When you are in control of your time, you will achieve your goals”.

*How to successfully combine work and the rest of your life? How to resolve challenges related to time management?*

On average, entrepreneurs work longer hours and take less time off than others. That is why many entrepreneurs may find it difficult to combine work and private life.

This guidebook is aimed at entrepreneurs who are looking for ideas and tips for combining work and the rest of their life, and for time management.

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